

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

1. BY Cosmology I mean the application, to subject-matter empirically known, of *à priori* conclusions derived from the investigation of the nature of pure thought. This superficial element clearly distinguishes Cosmology from the pure thought of Hegel's Logic. On the other hand, it is clearly to be distinguished from the empirical conclusions of science and every-day life. These also, it is true, involve an *à priori* element, since no knowledge is possible without the categories, but they do not depend on an explicit affirmation of *à priori* truths. It is possible for men to agree on a law of chemistry, or on the guilt of a prisoner, regardless of their metaphysical disagreements. And a man may come to correct conclusions on these subjects without any metaphysical knowledge at all. In Cosmology, however, the conclusions reached are deduced from propositions relating to pure thought. Without these propositions there can be no Cosmology, and a disagreement about pure thought must result in disagreements about Cosmology.

Of this nature are the subjects treated of in this book. The conception of the human self is a conception with empirical elements, and there is therefore an empirical element in the question whether such selves are eternal, and whether the Absolute is a similar self. So too the conceptions of Morality, of Punishment, of Sin, of the State, of Love, have all empirical elements in them. Yet none of the questions we shall discuss can be dealt with by the finite sciences. They cannot be settled by direct observation, nor can they be determined by

induction. In some cases the scope of the question is so vast, that an induction based on instances within the sphere of our observation would not give even the slightest rational presumption in favour of any solution. In other cases the question relates to a state of things so different to our present experience that no relevant instances can be found. The only possible treatment of such subjects is metaphysical.

2. Hegel gives a very small part of his writings to Cosmological questions—a curious fact when we consider their great theoretical interest, and still greater practical importance. When he passes out of the realm of pure thought, he generally confines himself to explaining, by the aid of the dialectic, the reasons for the existence of particular facts, which, on empirical grounds, are known to exist, or, in some cases, wrongly supposed to exist. The Philosophy of Nature, the greater part of the Philosophy of Spirit, and nearly the whole of the Philosophy of Law, of the Philosophy of History, and of the Aesthetic, are taken up by this. The same thing may be said of the Second Part of the Philosophy of Religion, the First and Third Parts of which contain almost the only detailed discussion of cosmological problems to be found in his works.

This peculiarity of Hegel's is curious, but undeniable. I do not know of any possible explanation, unless in so far as one may be found in his want of personal interest in the part of philosophy which most people find more interesting than any other. When I speak in this book of Hegelian Cosmology, I do not propose to consider mainly the views actually expressed by Hegel, except in Chapter VIII, and, to some extent, in Chapter V. Elsewhere it will be my object to consider what views on the subjects under discussion ought logically to be held by a thinker who accepts Hegel's Logic, and, in particular, Hegel's theory of the Absolute Idea. I presume, in short, to endeavour to supplement, rather than to expound.

It is for this reason that I have devoted so much space to discussing the views of Lotze, of Mr Bradley, and of Professor Mackenzie. Since we have so little assistance on this subject from Hegel himself, it seemed desirable to consider the course taken by philosophers who held the same conception of the

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Absolute as was held by Hegel, or who supported their opinions by arguments which would be equally relevant to Hegel's conception of the Absolute.

3. The subject-matter of those problems which can only be treated by Cosmology is varied, and the following chapters are, in consequence, rather disconnected from each other. But they illustrate, I think, three main principles. The first of these is that the element of differentiation and multiplicity occupies a much stronger place in Hegel's system than is generally believed. It is on this principle that I have endeavoured to show that all finite selves are eternal, and that the Absolute is not a self. These two conclusions seem to me to be very closely connected. As a matter of history, no doubt, the doctrines of human immortality and of a personal God have been rather associated than opposed. But this is due, I think, to the fact that attempts have rarely been made to demonstrate both of them metaphysically in the same system. I believe that it would be difficult to find a proof of our own immortality which did not place God in the position of a community, rather than a person, and equally difficult to find a conception of a personal God which did not render our existence dependent on his will—a will whose decisions our reason could not foresee.

My second main principle is that Hegel greatly overestimated the extent to which it was possible to explain particular finite events by the aid of the Logic. For this view I have given some reasons in Chapter VII of my *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic*. Applications of it will be found in Chapters IV and VII of the present work, and, in a lesser degree, in Chapters V and VI.

Thirdly, in Chapter IX, I have endeavoured to demonstrate the extent to which the Logic involves a mystical view of reality—an implication of which Hegel himself was not, I think, fully conscious, but which he realised much more fully than most of his commentators.

CHAPTER II.

HUMAN IMMORTALITY.

4. EXPERIENCE teaches us that there exist in the Universe finite personal spirits¹. I judge myself, in the first place, to be such a finite personal spirit—to be something to which all my experience is related, and so related, that, in the midst of the multiplicity of experience, it is a unity, and that, in the midst of the flux of experience, it remains identical with itself. And I proceed to judge that certain effects, resembling those which I perceive myself to produce, are produced by other spirits of a similar nature. It is certain that this last judgment is sometimes wrong in particular cases. I may judge during a dream that I am in relation with some person who does not, in fact, exist at all. And, for a few minutes, an ingenious automaton may occasionally be mistaken for the body of a living person. But philosophy, with the exception of Solipsism, agrees with common sense that I am correct in the general judgment that there do exist other finite personal spirits as well as mine.

These spirits are called selves. And the problem which we have now to consider is whether there is a point in time for each self after which it would be correct to say that the self had ceased to exist. If not, it must be considered as immortal,

¹ Throughout this chapter, I shall employ the word finite, when used without qualification, to denote anything which has any reality outside it, whether its determination is merely external, or due to its own nature. Hegel himself speaks of the self-determined as infinite. But this is inconvenient in practice, though it is based on an important truth. For it leaves without a name the difference between the whole and a part of reality, while it gives the name of infinity to a quality which has already an appropriate name—self-determination.

whether as existing throughout endless time, or as having a timeless and therefore endless existence.

5. Hegel's own position on this question, as on so many other questions of cosmology, is not a little perplexing. He asserts the truth of immortality in several places¹, and he never denies it. But his assertions are slight and passing statements, to which he gives no prominence. And in the case of a doctrine of such importance, a merely incidental assertion is almost equivalent to a denial.

When we pass to the applications of the dialectic, the perplexity becomes still greater. For the doctrine of immortality is quietly ignored in them. Hegel treats at great length of the nature, of the duties, of the hopes, of human society, without paying the least attention to his own belief that, for each of the men who compose that society, life in it is but an infinitesimal fragment of his whole existence—a fragment which can have no meaning except in its relation to the whole. Can we believe that he really held a doctrine which he neglected in this manner?

On the other hand we have his explicit statements that immortality is to be ascribed to the self. To suppose these statements to be insincere is impossible. There is nothing in Hegel's life or character which would justify us in believing that he would have misrepresented his views to avoid persecution. Nor would the omission of such casual and trifling affirmations of the orthodox doctrine have rendered his work appreciably more likely to attract the displeasure of the governments under which he served.

6. The real explanation, I think, must be found elsewhere. The fact is that Hegel does not appear to have been much interested in the question of immortality. This would account for the fact that, while he answers the question in the affirmative, he makes so little use of the answer. It is the fundamental doctrine of his whole system that reality is essentially spirit. And there seems no reason whatever to accuse him of supposing that spirit could exist except as persons. But—rather

¹ Cp. *Philosophy of Religion*, i. 79, ii. 268, 313, 495 (trans. i. 79, iii. 57, 105, 303).

illogically—he seems never to have considered the individual persons as of much importance. All that was necessary was that the spirit should be there in some personal form or another. It follows, of course, from this, that he never attached much importance to the question of whether spirit was eternally manifested in the same persons, or in a succession of different persons.

No one, I imagine, can read Hegel's works, especially those which contain the applications of the dialectic, without being struck by this characteristic. At times it goes so far as almost to justify the criticism that reality is only considered valuable by Hegel because it forms a schema for the display of the pure Idea. I have tried to show elsewhere¹ that this view is not essential to Hegel's system, and, indeed, that it is absolutely inconsistent with it. But this only shows more clearly that Hegel's mind was naturally very strongly inclined towards such views, since even his own fundamental principles could not prevent him from continually recurring to them.

Since Hegel fails to emphasise the individuality of the individual, his omission to emphasise the immortality of the individual is accounted for. But it remains a defect in his work. For this is a question which no philosophy can be justified in treating as insignificant. A philosopher may answer it affirmatively, or negatively, or may deny his power of answering it at all. But, however he may deal with it, he is clearly wrong if he treats it as unimportant. For it does not only make all the difference for the future, but it makes a profound difference for the present. Am I eternal, or am I a mere temporary manifestation of something eternal which is not myself? The answer to this question may not greatly influence my duties in every-day life. Immortal or not, it is equally my duty to pay my bills, and not to cheat at cards, nor to betray my country. But we can scarcely exaggerate the difference which will be made in our estimate of our place in the universe, and, consequently, in our ideals, our aspirations, our hopes, the whole of the emotional colouring of our lives. And this is most of all the case on Hegelian principles, which declare that

¹ *Studies in the Hegelian Dialectic.*

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existence in time is inadequate, and relatively unreal. If we are immortal, we may be the supreme end of all reality. If time made us, and will break us, our highest function must be to be the means of some end other than ourselves.

7. To determine the true relation of Hegel's philosophy to the doctrine of immortality, we must go into the matter at greater length than he has thought it worth while to do himself. We must take Hegel's account of the true nature of reality, and must ask whether this requires or excludes the eternal existence of selves such as our own. Now Hegel's account of the true nature of reality is that it is Absolute Spirit. And when we ask what is the nature of Absolute Spirit, we are told that its content is the Absolute Idea. The solution of our problem, then, will be found in the Absolute Idea.

8. We are certain, at any rate, that the doctrine of the Absolute Idea teaches us that all reality is spirit. No one, I believe, has ever doubted that this is Hegel's meaning. And it is also beyond doubt, I think, that he conceived this spirit as necessarily differentiated. Each of these differentiations, as not being the whole of spirit, will be finite. This brings us, perhaps, nearer to the demonstration of immortality, but is far from completing it. It is the eternal nature of spirit to be differentiated into finite spirits. But it does not necessarily follow that each of these differentiations is eternal. It might be held that spirit was continually taking fresh shapes, such as were the modes of Spinoza's Substance, and that each differentiation was temporary, though the succession of differentiations was eternal. And, even if it were established that spirit possessed eternal differentiations, the philosophising human being would still have to determine whether he himself, and the other conscious beings with whom he came in contact, were among these eternal differentiations.

If both these points were determined in the affirmative we should have a demonstration of immortality. But the conclusion will be different in two respects from the ordinary form in which a belief in immortality is held. The ordinary belief confines immortality to mankind—so far as the inhabitants

of this planet are concerned. The lower animals are not supposed, by most people, to survive the death of their present bodies. And even those who extend immortality to all animals commonly hold that much of reality is not spiritual at all, but material, and that consequently neither mortality nor immortality can be predicated of it with any meaning. But if we can deduce immortality from the nature of the Absolute Idea, it will apply to all spirit—that is to say to all reality—and we shall be led to the conclusion that the universe consists entirely of conscious and immortal spirits.

The second peculiarity of the conclusion will be that the immortality to which it refers will not be an endless existence in time, but an eternal, *i.e.*, timeless existence, of which whatever duration in time may belong to the spirit will be a subordinate manifestation only. But this, though it would separate our view from some of the cruder forms of the belief, is, of course, not exclusively Hegelian but continually recurs both in philosophy and theology.

We have to enquire, then, in the first place, whether our selves are among the fundamental differentiations of spirit, whose existence is indicated by the dialectic, and, if this is so, we must then enquire whether each of these differentiations exists eternally.

9. The first of these questions cannot be settled entirely by pure thought, because one of the terms employed is a matter of empirical experience. We can tell by pure thought what must be the nature of the fundamental differentiations of spirit. But then we have also to ask whether our own natures correspond to this description in such a way as to justify us in believing that we are some of those differentiations. Now our knowledge of what we ourselves are is not a matter of pure thought—it cannot be deduced by the dialectic method from the single premise of Pure Being. We know what we ourselves are, because we observe ourselves to be so. And this is empirical.

Accordingly our treatment of the first question will fall into two parts. We must first determine what is the nature of the differentiations of spirit. This is a problem for the

dialectic, and must be worked out by pure thought. And then we must apply the results of pure thought, thus gained, by enquiring how far our selves can or must be included in the number of those differentiations.

10. Hegel's own definition of the Absolute Idea is, "der Begriff der Idee, dem die Idee als solche der Gegenstand, dem das Objekt sie ist¹." This by itself will not give us very much help in our present enquiry. But, as Hegel himself tells us, to know the full meaning of any category, we must not be content with its definition, but must observe how it grows out of those which precede it. We must therefore follow the course of the dialectic to see how the Absolute Idea is determined. It would be too lengthy to start with the category of Pure Being, and go through the whole chain of categories, and it will therefore be necessary to take some point at which to make a beginning. This point, I think, may conveniently be found in the category of Life. There seems to be very little doubt or ambiguity about Hegel's conception of this category as a whole, although the subdivisions which he introduces into it are among the most confused parts of the whole dialectic. And it is at this point that the differentiations of the unity begin to assume those special characteristics by which, if at all, they will be proved to be conscious beings. For both these reasons, it seems well to begin at the category of Life.

According to that category reality is a unity differentiated into a plurality (or a plurality combined into a unity) in such a way that the whole meaning and significance of the unity lies in its being differentiated into that particular plurality, and that the whole meaning and significance of the parts of the plurality lies in their being combined into that particular unity.

We have now to consider the transition from the category of Life to that of Cognition. We may briefly anticipate the argument by saying that the unity required by the category of Life will prove fatal to the plurality, which is no less essential to the category, unless that plurality is of a peculiar nature;

¹ *Encyclopaedia*, Section 236.

and that it is this peculiarity which takes us into the category of Cognition¹.

11. The unity which connects the individuals is not anything outside them, for it has no reality distinct from them. The unity has, therefore, to be somehow *in* the individuals² which it unites. Now in what sense can the unity be *in* the individuals?

It is clear, in the first place, that it is not in each of them taken separately. This would be obviously contradictory, since, if the unity was in each of them taken separately, it could not connect one of them with another, and, therefore, would not be a unity at all.

12. The common-sense solution of the question would seem to be that the unity is not in each of them when taken separately, but that it is in all of them when taken together. But if we attempt to escape in this way, we fall into a fatal difficulty. That things can be taken together implies that they can be distinguished. For, if there were no means of distinguishing them, they would not be an aggregate at all, but a mere undifferentiated unity. Now a unity which is only in the aggregate cannot be the means of distinguishing the individuals, which make up that aggregate, from one another. For such a unity has only to do with the individuals in so far as they are one. It has no relation with the qualities which make them many. But, by the definition of the category, the whole nature of the individuals lies in their being parts of that unity. Consequently, if the unity does not distinguish them, they will not be distinguished at all, and therefore will not exist as an aggregate.

In the case of less perfect unities there would be no difficulty in saying that they resided in the aggregate of the individuals, and not in the individuals taken separately. A regiment, for example, is not a reality apart from the soldiers,

¹ Sections 11—19 are taken, with some omissions, from a paper on Hegel's Treatment of the Categories of the Idea, published in *Mind*, 1900, p. 145.

² I use the word Individual here in the sense given it by Hegel (cp. especially the Subjective Notion). To use it in the popular sense in which it is equivalent to a person would be, of course, to beg the question under discussion.